6: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936)1938
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512 226 883 About noon youths and maidens bathe in the river wherever a shallow sandy stretch offers a clear playground. They do the same at inland lakes but much time is there given also to fishing. The young people sit and splash in the water and the sexes flirt and wrestle in and out of the water. At about 2.30 they return to the camp where the girls churn the morning milk and pound and grind millet for the evening meal. The men turn over the drying dung with their sticks and then, having nothing more they need attend to, most of them return to their windscreens though one or two youths may try and spear fish in the shallows and they are joined there by older boys who are not herding the calves.

512 233 237 372 About 4-30 p.m. the small calves are brought from the shade where they have spent the day and are tethered in the kraal. The men hold them between their legs and lifting up their heads compel them to swallow water. At this time the boys bring back the larger calves and goats and sheep from grazing. Members of each household tether their animals. Generally one or two men now go out to meet (*luor*) the returning herd. Others gather the dried dung on hides from the heaps into which boys have swept it, and each owner of a windscreen makes up the evening fire on his hearth. There is no need to light the fires as they have been smouldering all day long and it is only necessary to clear away surface ashes and heap the new fuel on the exposed embers. Dense clouds of smoke arise and envelope the camp.

512 233 462 264 By 5 o'clock cows which have recently calved come running home and herald the approach of the herd which appears from 15 to 30 minutes later. Adult men tether the cattle of their household and women and boys commence at once to milk the cows and they finish this work before sunset. The women then prepare the evening meal and finish their dairy work. The men sit in their windscreens and await the meal which is served between 7 and 8 p.m. Nuer eat twice a day: in the morning and in the evening. The evening meal consists of millet porridge, with cheese or butter, or both, poured over it. The morning meal is generally the remains of supper heated up or with hot milk poured over it.

1. Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
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221 Seasonal variation in quantity and kind of food is sociologically significant for several reasons, though not all are relevant to the present study. It is, however, important to note that abundance of millet is the main reason for holding ceremonies in the rains, for ritual is seldom complete without porridge and beer and, since it consists of sacrifice, of meat also. Weddings, initiation rites, and religious ceremonies of various kinds take place in the rains and early drought, generally after the first millet harvest. This is also the main season for [[21]] raiding the Dinka. Nuer say that hunger and war are bad companions and that they are too hungry to fight in the full dry season; and it is evident that they are then not so eager to come to blows over personal and community quarrels as they are in the rainy months, when they are replete with grain and meat and, especially at wedding dances, sometimes slightly intoxi- [[31]] cated. Nor do the young men find dancing so attractive in the drought, whereas in the rains they dance as much as possible and think nothing of travelling many miles to attend weddings, at which they dance from eventide till well into the morning. The tempo of village life is different from that of camp life. Owing to flooding at the height of the rains these joint activities take place mainly at the beginning and end—chiefly at the end —of the wet season.

●264 574 Scarcity of food at times and the narrow margin that for most of the year divides sufficiency from famine cause a high degree of interdependence among members of the smaller local groups, which may be said to have a common stock of food. Although each household owns its own food, does its own cooking, and provides independently for the needs of its members, men, and much less, women and children, eat in one another's homes to such an extent that, looked at from outside, the whole community is seen to be partaking of a joint supply. Rules of hospitality and conventions about the division of meat and fish lead to a far wider sharing of food than a bare statement of the principles of ownership would suggest. Young men eat at all byres in the vicinity; every household gives beer parties which their neighbours and kinsmen attend; the sar e people are given food and beer at the co-operative work parties that assist in any difficult and laborious task; in camps it is

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
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considered correct for men to visit the windscreens of their friends to drink milk, and a special gourd of sour milk is kept for guests; when an ox is sacrificed or a wild animal is killed the meat is always, in one way or another, widely distributed; people are expected to give part of their catch of fish to those who ask them for it; people assist one another when there is a shortage of milk or grain; and so forth. This mutual assistance and common consumption of food, which is especially evident in compact dry-season camps, belongs rather to the subject of domestic and kinship relations than to the present account. I wish here only to stress the following points: (1) This habit of share and share alike is easily understandable in a community where every one is likely to find himself in difficulties from time to time, for it is scarcity and not sufficiency that makes people generous, since everybody is thereby insured against hunger. He who is in need to-day receives help from him who may be in like need to-morrow. (2) While the greatest sharing is in the smaller domestic and kinship groups, there is also so much mutual assistance and hospitality among members of villages and camps that one may speak of a common economy of these communities, which are treated in this book as the smallest political groups in Nuerland and within which are taken for granted ties of kinship, affinity, age-sets, and so forth.

## X

I have examined Nuer food-supply in relation to their oecology and I now give a brief account of their material culture in the same terms. When a Nuer is born he enters not only into a natural environment but also into a domesticated environment which is the product of human labour; and this inner world is constructed from the outer world, its form and content being strictly limited by natural resources. I am neither desirous nor capable of describing technological procedures, and to excuse myself in some degree for this omission I am including in this and in a second volume an unusually large number of plates and figures illustrating many examples of Nuer handiwork. However, some general remarks on the limiting conditions of production seem pertinent.

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
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561 are his fathers, and the *Lithgac* and the *Luac* tend to see themselves as a single group in relation to the *Maker*, having a like attitude of respect towards them. But in relation to the *Dangunga* and to the *Lithgac*, the *Luac* identify themselves with the one or the other according to the direction of attention, and this is determined by the social situation. Any set tends to see the set senior to it as equals in relation to junior sets and the set junior to it as equals in relation to senior sets. It is possibly this contradiction which creates segmentation in any set. Thus, 561 at sacrificial feasts men eat according to their position in the 264 age-set structure, but which sets sit and eat together depends on the set of the owner of the feast and on the number of sets present at it. If a *Dangunga* kills an ox and there are *Makei* present, but not *Boiloc*, then *Dangunga* eat with *Maker* and *Luac* with *Lithgac* and the *Riaimac* by themselves; but if there are *Boiloc* present then the *Maker* eat with them and the *Dangunga* with the *Luac*, and the *Lithgac* with the *Rialmac*. The *Dangunga* would not eat with the *Boiloc* because they are the set of their fathers or fathers-in-law; and for the same reason the *Luac* must eat with the *Lithgac* if the *Dangunga* go with the *Maker*.

561 The age-set system differs from the territorial and lineage systems in one important respect. Whereas the people of a territorial segment remain, or most of them remain, in the same structural relation to other territorial segments for their whole lives, and whereas the members of a lineage have a fixed relationship to other lineages, an age-set group changes its position in relation to the whole system, passing through points of relative juniority and seniority. This mobility of age-set groups is peculiar to the system and is a necessary characteristic of it, for it is an institution based on the succession of generations. Probably, for oecological reasons, the actual political configuration remains very much the same from generation to generation. People pass through the political system without their structural position in it changing to any extent during their passage. It is the same with the lineage system. Nevertheless the mobility of groups through the age-set structure and their changing position in it should not be allowed to obscure the constancy of its structural form. There have pro-

2:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1951
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a man would chant if there were no girls near, a Nuer replied: 'And if there were no girls near, what would he chant for?' A youth who wants a girl in marriage goes to her village or camp in the evening and chants there for an hour or two. He knows that she will understand that the poem is about herself. Her relatives know why he has come.

A youth is particularly careful not to be seen eating by unrelated girls: 'If he is not making love to them, he may do so some time or to one of their relatives.' When I asked whether it would matter if your sisters saw you eating, the reply was, 'Do you make love to your sisters?' Food must never be mentioned in the presence of girls, and a man will endure severe hunger rather than let them know that he has not eaten for a long time. It is a strict rule of Nuer society that the sexes, unless they are close kin, avoid each other in the matter of food. Nuer do not go near persons of the other sex when they are eating. A man may mention food but not sexual matters before kinswomen, and he may mention sexual matters but not food before unrelated girls.

Girls are the arbiters of decorum, and the severest sanction of a breach of good form is their disapproval. Not only is the shame of it a sanction for etiquette, but it is a powerful influence in making a youth generous, respectful to his elders, dutiful to his parents and kinsmen, hospitable to guests, industrious, and brave. The girls on their side are anxious to earn the good opinion of youths by correct behaviour in the home and in society.

It will have been observed that it rests entirely with a girl whether she accepts a man's attentions and how far he presses his advances. A girl who is fond of a youth wants him to marry her. If he is philandering she will, if she has any regard for her chastity, be frugal with her favours. The talk between a youth and his sweetheart is frequently the topic of marriage. He asks her whether she will marry him, and she says that she will if he has cattle and her parents consent; or he entreats her to allow intimacy, and she urges that she might become pregnant and he not marry her, and she would then be in trouble. However, if a girl is in love with a youth, and he has a winning manner, she may surrender to his pleading. Men often break the promises they make to girls when they want favours from them, and in looking for a wife a man may pass over all his sweethearts, past and present, and go with his friends to seek a spouse outside the circle of his usual acquaintances.

6: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936)1938
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233 512 [533] they may have to defend them against carnivorous beasts and human raiders. Often they relieve the monotony and solitude by composing and chanting songs. Nuer say that most songs are invented in the grazing grounds. Herdsmen have a quick meal before leaving camp and, except when there are plenty of *heglig* fruits in the early part of the dry season, they will not have another bite till after sunset. However hungry he might feel no herdsman would milk a cow. [264]

512 462 234 237 After the cattle have left camp the day is closed for the men, as far as routine cattle tasks are concerned, till they are brought back to the kraal in the evening; but women and boys continue their labours. Women milk the goats and sheep and prepare the morning meal. Boys spread out the cattle dung that has collected overnight so that it may dry in the sun and furnish fuel to replenish the household fires at night. They also smooth the part of the kraal occupied by their beasts by rubbing over the earth the nightly residue of ashes, urine, and dung. Boys assist in milking the goats and in taking the small calves to shade. They then take the larger calves and the [233] flocks to pasture. Older boys herd the calves and younger boys look after the flocks in the vicinity of the kraal. They spend most of the day playing games. If a small boy is hungry he catches a she-goat [857] and milks it, holding it by the horns with one hand while he pats its udder and squeezes its teats with the other hand from which he then licks the milk. Or he may suckle it. People do not object to small boys milking the goats they are herding. They are small and hungry and need all the food they can get to grow into strong men.

512 462 224 Not all the adult men have been idle while their womenfolk and the boys have been cleaning the kraal and milking. On most mornings parties of two and three leave camp at dawn with their dogs to pick up a gazelle or other small animal. They do not return to camp till after milking is finished, and those who set out at dawn to inspect their giraffe traps return about the same time. After the cattle have been loosened the men potter about for a couple of hours. Generally some of them are engaged in making utensils and ornaments or in dressing their hair.

512 she goes. She steadies her jar with her hand as she goes
482 down the river bank.

She rinses her jar with water, then fills it. She usually stops to wash her face and is then ready to return to her village. She calls one of the other women who are getting water, or if there are none there to help she calls some passer-by, who—even if it be a man—will usually stop to help her to lift the jar up and put it on her head. On the homeward trip she steadies the jar with one hand, as being full of water it is much heavier.

512 When she returns to her home the morning meal must
252 be ready by nine or ten o'clock. So she pounds the dura in the hole already described, and sifts it until she has enough for the morning meal. Or perhaps she has a large stone, in which case she takes a small piece of smoothed wood resembling our rolling-pin and grinds the dura on the stone with it.

Then the fire is built with cane-stalks for fuel, and the earthen cooking-pot, partly filled with water, is put over the fire. It is supported by three little mounds of hard baked earth, and she keeps shoving the stalks of cane into the fire as fast as they burn away. The pounded dura is put into the water gradually, a little at a time, and stirred frequently with a cane-stalk having two small cross-pieces fastened at right angles at the end of it, made for that purpose. When the food is ready, the woman dishes up the men's portion in a large half-gourd which serves as a dish, puts the mussel-shell spoons in it, and calls the men to their breakfast. They go into the house and eat.

512 Then the women, if they are young or newly married,
264 eat where they will not be seen by the men. If they have been married several years they may eat together.

512 The yard has to be swept, the children fed and cared for, more dura must be pounded for the evening meal.

1 [Cf. pp. 19-20, Category 116.--Analyst]

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
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by the children falls to her. When just a little girl she must take a gourd and carry water, learning to balance it on her head. She must help to care for the baby, carrying it astride one hip, with her arm around it. Cane-stalks must be brought for fuel, or she may accompany her mother when she goes to the forest to get wood. She gathers sticks of wood, binding them together with grass, and carries them home on her head. Or she may accompany her mother when she goes out to cut grass for roofing the houses. She early learns to carry her burden poised on top of her head.

As she grows older she learns to pound dura and to sift and cook it. She learns all the art of the Nuer housekeeper and, indeed, soon becomes a small replica of her mother.

The little girls play 'keeping house' and imitate their mothers to the best of their ability.

The older girls of the village usually have a house given them for sleeping quarters.

As the girl grows older she learns to smoke the family pipe and becomes as attached to it as her mother is.

When she is twelve or thirteen years old she begins to observe the age-old customs which until then she has been able to ignore. For instance, now she must never eat before a boy of her own age or older. Furthermore, she must never see him eat if there is any possibility that he may some day be a suitor for her hand in marriage.

She bleaches her hair and adorns her body with all possible ornaments. She dons her grass skirts and attends dances now. Her father and brothers are interested in giving her beads and other ornaments, for a well-favoured girl will bring more cattle when the marriage price is discussed. Her father and brothers are dictators as to what she may do and as to what plans may be made

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
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The next morning before she comes out of the house where she has spent the night, the sister of the bridegroom or some other woman relative comes in to bring her the married woman's garb, which they have prepared for her, and such ornaments as they wish to give her. At this time the beads are put in her ears. When she comes out of the house she is attired as a married woman, and from this time on she must wear some kind of a loin-cloth. 585 291

Her girl friends and herself are guests at a big feast at the village of her husband that day, at which there is plenty of food and drink in evidence. When the feast is over, the girls return to the home of the bride's mother, for the Nuer bride does not stay with her husband but returns to her mother's home and spends most of her time there for the first year or two of her married life, although her husband may come to see her at any time, or she may go to his village whenever he wishes her to do so. 585

## CUSTOMS CONCERNING MARRIAGE

A wife never eats with her husband nor sees him eat. And he, while he knows she eats her food each day, never sees any sign of it. This custom is usually observed for two or three years. Then they may eat together. The wife usually stays with her mother until her child is a year or two old at least. 264

The wife must render a daughter's allegiance to her mother-in-law, while her husband, in turn, must help his wife's mother as she desires, hoeing her field, or cutting her dura, or whatever she asks of him. 606

He never appears before his mother-in-law without a loin-cloth on, and for some time must never come to see her without sending word in advance. [576]

The oldest son is allowed to be married first, and the family unite in getting his cattle ready for him. Then he 582

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

*Chapter Eight*

# CHARACTERISTICS, GAMES, AND MEASUREMENTS

## THE REAL NUER

157 THE Nuer improves upon acquaintance. At first sight his better qualities are hidden from the casual glance and his body is anything but beautiful in its usual grey coating of cow-manure ashes. But to know the Nuer is to love him; for as one becomes acquainted with him he will begin to trust you, and you may penetrate the surface mask of reserve and find a depth of finer qualities within.

The favourite expression of a Nuer when asked a question which he does not care to answer is 'I do not know'. But as one becomes better acquainted with him he becomes willing to confide in any one whom he respects.

I have found refinement, consideration for others, courtesy, and faithfulness, as well as many other qualities, not only dormant but active in many Nuer.

153 The Nuer, probably because he has never been able to
151 write, has a splendid memory, and is a good talker and imitator. He may relate some conversation he has heard and imitate each person in tone and manner. He can also imitate birds and animals.

## SENSE OF COMMUNITY

264 When the Nuer eat they always use a common dish, and if one person is late to the meal, they await his arrival before beginning to eat so that all may share alike. Likewise, if one has had sufficient food and stops eating before the food is finished, the others ask him why he does not eat more before they proceed to finish their meal, eating the remainder of his portion of food.

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
FJ22 Nuer FJ22



in the home of his parents-in-law they avoid offering him milk from the cattle he has paid them. Further, if there is a divorce and the bridewealth cattle are returned to the husband's people they sacrifice a goat before they drink of their milk.

Nuer 'respect with regard to food' unrelated people (*nei ti gwagh*) of the opposite sex, especially if they are unmarried and possible sweethearts. They will not eat with them or even see them, or be seen by them, eating and drinking, and food must not be mentioned when they are both present. The sexes, unless they are kin, avoid each other in the matter of food. Nuer feel so strongly about this avoidance that I was obliged to observe it strictly myself.

Another situation in reference to which one hears the word *thek* is homicide. I discuss it in greater detail in Chapter XII. A man who slays another respects water—he may not drink—until a priest has made sacrifice and cut his right arm. Then until the blood-feud is closed by payment of cattle and by sacrifices the kin of the slayer and the kin of the slain may not eat or drink from vessels from which the other has eaten or drunk. They respect the vessels and the food and water of the other party. Even to use the same vessels at the home of a third party who is in no way connected with the feud may entail the most serious consequences. A third party may cause death to one side or the other by eating or drinking with both.

Another use of the word *thek*, which, as always, contains the idea of avoidance, is in reference to burial and to mortuary sacrifices. Those who bury a corpse respect water—they may not drink—until they have been cleansed. Members of a dead man's age-set abstain from the meat of the cattle sacrificed at the ceremony held to close the period of mourning for him. They are said to respect the meat. It has been noted earlier (p. 55) that people may not eat or drink in the homes of close kin of a person struck by lightning before they have sacrificed. Another use is in connexion with the eldest child of a marriage. He respects the spoons of his parents and the sleeping-hide of his mother. He is careful not to eat with the first or sit on the second. Were he to do so he might cause the mother to be barren and injure the father, himself, and the cattle. A man is also said to respect his as yet unconceived children by abstaining from congress with his wife when she is menstruating[1]

[1] He is not said to *thek*, respect, his wife when she is menstruating. He